

THE
COUNTRY SPECTATOR.

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*Andire est operæ pretium, procedere rectè
Qui rem Romanam Latiumque augescere vultis. ENNIUS.*

Thou, that in NEWS-ROOM holdest fierce debate
On Britain's glory or its fallen state,
"To thee I call:"—with willing ear attend,
And hear the counsels of your COUNTRY friend:
Small is my fee; for who would e'er delay
TWO-PENCE for wisdom or for wit to pay?

THE passion for News and the love of dabbling in Politics, which distinguish our nation above all others, are not confined to the Capital alone, but have found their way to the remotest parts of the kingdom. In confirmation of this remark, we may observe that in almost every market-town a room is set apart for the use of those, who wish to be acquainted with the events

of the day. Hither Country Politicians and rural statesmen hasten on the arrival of the Post from London, and according to their different tenets vilify or extol the Constitution.

THE *News-Room* is a place of so general resort, and is productive of so many advantages, not only to those who frequent it, but to the body of the people in the Country, that it well deserves the notice and commendation of the Country Spectator. I shall, therefore devote to-day's speculation to a display of the great utility of News-rooms, and shall subjoin a few rules, which may be of use to the company, who assemble there. Since, however, it is scarcely possible that I should write on such a subject without betraying my own Political sentiments, and since I do not wish to make proselytes of my Readers by taking them off their guard, I think proper to admonish them, that I myself am a stanch friend to *Democracy*. It is not necessary that I should give my particular reasons for having espoused the cause of the people, since nine Authors out of ten have done the same, and since it seems perfectly natural that they all should do so. If a declaimer can by his eloquence persuade the people that they are oppressed by their governors, and can incite them to take the power into their own hands, he may surely hope to be rewarded for having meliorated their condition: and tho' there is some danger that his zeal for their happiness may be misconstrued into turbulence

and sedition, and that the mob, blind to their own interest, may turn with fury on their Teachers, yet what can they do to us Authors? They cannot give vent to their resentment by laying waste our *land*; and as to our *houses*,—we live in *lodgings*.

IN estimating the benefits, which every Town derives from its News-room, we must consider how far it contributes, by reducing the price of News, to make the inhabitants better acquainted with the Papers. It is not possible to form any accurate calculations on this head, as it must depend on many extraneous circumstances, which no calculator can take into the account. We may, perhaps, lay it down as a general rule, that of the subscribers to every Room, not above one in ten would take in a Paper to himself. I shall, therefore, in my enumeration of the advantages arising from these admirable institutions, consider them as solely producing an effect, to which they contribute in so great a degree.

THE News-room, then, is a source of useful information to all, who visit it. The Papers, it is well known, are among the most instructive and elegant compositions of the present day. They seldom, indeed, display much extent of learning or depth of thought; these they very prudently leave to the compilers of those huge musty volumes, which load the shelves of libraries; but they teach us (what are

of infinitely greater importance) life and manners, and acquaint us with the most interesting events of the age, in which we live. By means of them we know on what day in last week his Majesty went a hunting, or the Princesses took the air in the Park; we learn at what hour of the morning the *Prince* walks on the *Steyne*, and at what races the *Duke of York* was the only gentleman on the turf. This and the like interesting intelligence is generally made known thro' all the towns in our latitude, within eighty or a hundred hours after the events actually took place.

BUT the Papers are never so extensively useful, as in the discussion of political subjects. The freedom of speech, which they employ on these occasions, assists greatly in enlarging our ideas and divesting our minds of the silly prejudices, which we all, more or less, inherit from our forefathers. Some of them, indeed, affect to speak with reverence of the Ministry and our *glorious Constitution*; but all the reputable and independent Prints nobly display the corruptions, which disgrace our Church and State; and that we may not be bigotted to our Religion or Religious establishments, their writers very laudably and ingeniously *compose* jokes on our Bishops and Clergy. In a word, they teach us to despise the slavish restraints, which all governments impose, and convince us that our Rulers deserve abuse by the patience, with which they bear it.

These notions properly diffused enlighten the understandings of the Country people, and cannot fail to kindle in their bosoms the fire of patriotism; for which reason a News-Room is in a Country-Town what the sun is in the system of the universe; it dispenses *light* and *heat* to the surrounding bodies. It is, therefore, one of the fortresses, which protect our liberties: without it we should few of us know how our Representatives are acting in Parliament, nor should we be able to gain any genuine political information, unless from the *Rights of Man*, and one or two other good Books, which are sold cheap, tho' not *under value*, for the benefit of the Poor.

THE News-Room is, moreover, an excellent school for young students in the art of oratory. I lately visited one of these places, in a certain town of my district, where a Politician was holding forth with exultation on the *Duke of Brunswick's* inglorious retreat. I could not help forming a comparison betwixt the scene then before me and that in a London Coffee-house; which is certainly less convenient for haranguing than the Country News-room. In the former, before an Orator has spoken ten minutes, he is interrupted by a waiter with a message from some impertinent coxcomb in the opposite box, who *deposes* that he came thither for the purpose of reading and not of hearing. If the speaker has any modesty, he is compelled to be silent; if he has none, he is compelled to depart.

I have known one of these clamorous Politicians fairly *ousted* by an advertisement inserted in his favorite Paper, declaring that "The ugly gentleman" in the striped coat, who sits in one of the corner "boxes of the *Chapter* Coffee-house, and harangues "his neighbours every morning from half past eleven to one o'clock, is a general nuisance: "resolved, that he be turned out." But in the Country, where people are better bred, this uncivil behaviour is never practised; and no man will interrupt his learned friend in the middle of a speech, for the sake of reading the news. I would, therefore, advise all Gentlemen who are in training for *Coachmaker's Hall*, for *Debating Cellars*, or for any other places of political discussion in Town, where young speakers are liable to be abashed by interruptions from the audience, to begin their career in some snug News-room in the North: and thus, when the advantages of such an education become generally known, they may boast of their early practice, as the Country barber signifies by a board over his door, that he has studied in London.

I MUST recollect, however, that I am probably writing to many, who will never move out of the circle of Country Politics. I shall, therefore, conclude this week's Essay by advising them, and indeed, all who are of the fraternity however dispersed, to fix their political opinions; that whenever they are called upon, they may be able to make the same

honest declaration, which I voluntarily made in the beginning of this Paper. But since it is not always easy for men to know precisely what opinions they hold, and since a conformity to some Creed is the usual method of discovering the principles and belief of those, who believe any thing at all, and even of those who ^c believe nothing, I shall subjoin two Political Creeds, one for the use of each of the great sects, into which the *French* and, of course, the *English* are at this day divided. They, who do *libenter et ex animo* subscribe to either of these sets of articles, may be assured that they are orthodox in the tenets of their respective sects. There may, indeed, be found several persons of nice consciences, who will not conform to a single article in either of these forms of belief; but such fellows I consider as heretics, who are determined to think for themselves; and, therefore, it is needless that I should offer them any rules, by which they may model their opinions.

THE ARISTOCRAT'S CREED.

- I. I believe that virtue and talents are attached to dignity of birth; which is the reason that all Kings are great and good men.
- II. I believe in the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, who *reflected* on the French Revolution.
- III. I believe that nothing can legally be done in Church or State without a precedent; which is the better for being found in the annals of the 11th Century.
- IV. I believe that the vulgar in all countries are a low set of peo-

^c Vid. CONNOISSEUR, No. 9.

ple, fit only to submit to their betters; that they are every where treated with too much lenity; and that they ought not to imagine that they are of any importance.

- V. Lastly, I believe that whatever is, is right; and, therefore, that nothing in our present form of government can be wrong.

THE DEMOCRAT'S CREED

will be somewhat longer than the former, which arises from my better acquaintance with the principles of my own party, than with those of any other.

- I. I believe that all genius and virtue resides among the people, who are disdainfully called the *Mob*.
- II. I believe in *Thos. Paine* and in every syllable of the *Rights of Man*; in the Editor of the *Morning Post*; and in a certain impartial publication, which ought to be more generally read, called the *Jockey Club*.
- III. I believe that all men are naturally equal, not in talents or integrity, which are, and ever will be, real distinctions; but in the absence of all distinctions whatever.
- IV. I believe that a *popular* government is the least exceptionable form of government, but that all government should be made *unpopular*.
- V. I believe that the present age is more virtuous and enlightened than any preceding one, as may be proved from the spirit of reform, which all Europe is introducing into Church and State.
- VI. I believe that my ancestors had no right to transmit a form of government to *me*, for which reason *I* will not be aiding and abetting in transmitting any form of government to my posterity.
- VII. I believe that all men have their *Rights*, except the King, and that he has no *right* at all to have any.
- VIII. Lastly, I believe that whatever is, is wrong; and, therefore, that opposition to the present system, whatever it is, is right.

R.